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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 08/19/09

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ARTICLES:

(1) What's New U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos like? A lawyer without experience in politics or diplomacy; President Obama trusts him -- "He can advise me"

(Reporter Yoso Furumoto answers readers' questions about the new U.S. Ambassador.)

Mainichi (Page 3) (Full)
August 19, 2009

Q: Mr. John Roos has been appointed the new U.S. Ambassador to Japan. What is the responsibility of the U.S. ambassador to Japan?

A: When there is a pending issue between Japan and the United States, past ambassadors have played an important role as mediator between Tokyo and Washington. (The U.S.) Ambassador (to Japan) plays an active role when bureaucrats are unable to coordinate their views. Recently, there have been many occasions when an ambassador played a coordinator's role because of gaps in awareness and a difference of opinion over the deployment of the Self-Defense Forces to Iraq and policy toward North Korea.

Q: U.S. President Barack Obama introduced Mr. Roos as "a man who can advise me directly." What about past ambassadors?

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A: Many political heavyweights have served as U.S. Ambassador to Japan. Mr. Howard Baker, the U.S. Ambassador to Japan 2001 - 2005, was leader of the Senate. Mr. Thomas Foley (1997 - 2001) was leader of the House, and Mr. Walter Mondale (1993 - 1996) was vice president. In Japan there was concern over Mr. Roos because he is not a politician and is not well known here. That is why President Obama introduced Mr. Roos as someone he trusts. It was President Obama's message to Japan that "there is no need to worry."

Q: I heard that Mr. Roos does not have experience in diplomacy.

A: Certainly, it is unusual that someone without experience in politics or diplomacy is named (U.S.) ambassador (to Japan). Like Mr. Roos, former Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer, a longtime friend of former U.S. President George Bush, has a background in business. However, Mr. Schieffer was a Texas state legislator and had been U.S. Ambassador to Australia before becoming his country's ambassador to Japan.

Q: What challenges will Ambassador Roos face?

A: A government led by the Democratic Party of Japan will likely take power after the general election. If that happens, his first task would be to meet with the leaders of the new government, accurately ascertain their thinking with regard to the U.S.-Japan relationship, and convey their views to the President. Mr. Roos worked as a lawyer in Silicon Valley, California, where companies at the cutting edge (of technology) are concentrated. According to people who have recently been in contact with him, he has a keen interest in the development of new energy and other advanced technologies. He appears to have specific ideas for fresh U.S.-Japan cooperation in this area. As for security, he has stressed the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance, so there is unlikely to be a big policy shift.

(2) Poll: Aso cabinet, political parties

ASAHI (Page 4) (Abridged)
August 18, 2009

Questions & Answers

(Figures are percentages, rounded off. Figures in the four columns, from left to right, are the results of previous surveys conducted

July 4-5, July 18-19, Aug. 1-2, and Aug. 15-16.)

Q: Do you support the Aso cabinet?

Yes 20 17 18 19
No 68 69 63 65

Q: Which political party do you support now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 24 20 24 20
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 25 31 26 32
New Komeito (NK) 3 3 4 2
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2 2 2 4
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1 1 1 1
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0 0 0 0
Your Party (YP or Minna no To) -- -- -- 0
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) 0 0 0 0
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 0 0 0

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Other political parties 0 0 0 0
None 39 35 30 34
No answer (N/A) + don't know (D/K) 6 8 13 6

Q: To what extent are you interested in the upcoming general election for the House of Representatives? (One choice only)

Very interested 38 43 49 49
Somewhat interested 36 38 35 38
Not very interested 20 13 11 12
Not interested at all 6 5 4 1

Q: If you were to vote now in the general election, which political party would you like to vote for in your proportional representation bloc?

LDP 22 19 22 21
DPJ 37 42 39 40
NK 4 4 5 4
JCP 4 4 3 5
SDP 1 1 1 2
PNP 0 1 0 1
YP -- -- -- 0
RC 0 0 0 0
NPN 0 0 0 0
Other political parties 1 1 1 0
N/A+D/K 31 28 29 27

Q: Which political party's candidate would you like to vote for in your single-seat constituency?

LDP 22 20 22 21
DPJ 32 37 37 40
NK 3 3 2 2
JCP 2 2 2 3
SDP 1 1 1 1
PNP 0 0 0 0
YP -- -- -- 0
RC 0 0 0 0
NPN 0 0 0 0
Other political parties 0 0 0 2
Independent candidate 2 0 1 1
N/A+D/K 39 37 35 29

Q: Would you like the current LDP-led coalition government to continue, or would you otherwise like it to be replaced with a DPJ-led coalition government?

LDP-led coalition 24 22 24 21
DPJ-led coalition 47 49 46 49

Q: Who do you think is more appropriate for prime minister, Prime Minister Aso or DPJ President Hatoyama?

Mr. Aso 22 21 20 20
Mr. Hatoyama 42 42 40 41

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted Aug. 15-16 over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Respondents were chosen from among the nation's voting population on a three-stage random-sampling basis. Households with one or more eligible voters totaled 1,730. Valid answers were obtained from

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1,011 people (58%).

(3) Poll on 2009 general election

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 12) (Abridged)
August 18, 2009

Questions & Answers
(Figures are percentages)

Q: Are you interested in the upcoming general election for the House of Representatives?

Yes 56.4
Yes to a certain extent 31.7
Not very interested 8.9
No 2.9
Don't know (D/K) + no answer (N/A) 0.1

Q: What do you weigh the most in the general election? Pick only one.

Social security, such as pension and healthcare 38.3
Economic policy 29.0
Job security 10.7
Fiscal reconstruction 7.8
Education reform 6.4
Public security 0.7
Foreign relations, national security 2.2
Constitution reform 1.7
Other answers (O/A) 1.4
D/K+N/A 1.8

Q: To what degree have you seen and compared the manifestos (campaign pledges) of various political parties for the upcoming general election?

I have their manifestos or pamphlets and read them 4.7
I check their manifestos in the newspaper or on the internet 20.4
I try to watch or listen to media reports 54.1
I only know something from media reports 15.0
I'm not interested in their manifestos 5.4
D/K+N/A 0.5

Q: Do you support the Aso cabinet?

Yes 21.7
No 70.1
D/K+N/A 8.3

Q: When comparing Prime Minister Taro Aso and Democratic Party of Japan President Yukio Hatoyama, who do you think is more appropriate for prime minister?

Taro Aso 25.2
Yukio Hatoyama 45.9
D/K+N/A 28.9

Q: Do you think the Democratic Party of Japan is competent to run the government?

Yes 41.2

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No 43.8
D/K+N/A 15.0

Q: Are you going to vote in the upcoming general election for the House of Representatives?

Yes for sure 76.3
Probably yes 18.6
Probably no 3.0
No 1.6
D/K+N/A 0.5

Q: Which political party's candidate are you going to vote for in your single-seat constituency?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 18.7
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 35.8
New Komeito (NK) 3.1
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2.4
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1.3
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.3
Your Party (YP or Minna no To) 0.3
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) 0.0
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.1
Other political parties 0.2
Independent 0.6
Undecided 34.4
D/K+N/A 2.8

Q: Which political party are you going to vote for in your proportional representation bloc?

LDP 16.2
DPJ 34.6
NK 5.2
JCP 3.3
SDP 1.8
PNP 0.7
YP 0.6
RC 0.0
NPN 0.2
Other political parties 0.3
Undecided 33.7
D/K+N/A 3.5

Q: What do you think is the desirable form of government?

LDP's single-party government 5.7
LDP-led coalition government 14.3
DPJ's single-party government 8.8
DPJ-led coalition government 25.8
LDP-DPJ grand coalition 16.5
New framework through political realignment 20.1
D/K+N/A 8.8

Q: Aside from the election, which political party do you usually support?

LDP 28.5
DPJ 18.5
NK 4.2
JCP 2.6

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SDP 1.5
PNP 0.1
YP 0.1
RC 0.0
NPN 0.1
Happiness Realization Party (HRP or Kofuku Jitsugento) 0.1
Other political parties 0.0
None 43.3
D/K+N/A 1.1

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted by the Tokyo Shimbun over a period of four days from Aug. 13 on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, a total of 3,600 persons were sampled from among the nation's voting population at 300

locations on a weighted average basis.

(4) DPJ "bullish" while LDP "defensive" in Lower House election, with DPJ fielding more candidates than LDP for the first time

MAINICHI (Top play) (Full)
August 19, 2009

Atsushi Nakamura, Nakae Ueno

The official start of campaigning for the 45h House of Representatives election was announced on August 18, and the battle for the election to "choose the administration" on August 30 has begun. This will be the first general election after the opposition parties came to control the House of Councillors in light of the crushing defeat of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the 2007 Upper House election. The formation of a DPJ-led coalition administration after this election is becoming a real possibility. This is also the first time that the DPJ is fielding more candidates than the LDP. The bullishness of the DPJ, which is fielding three times as many candidates as the original number of seats it held before this election, is evident. The ruling parties' fierce attack on the opposition DPJ in stump speeches also gives the impression of a reversal of the position of the ruling and opposition parties.

In Hachioji City, Tokyo, on August 18 Prime Minister Taro Aso (LDP president) gave a speech in which he criticized the DPJ. "Does the DPJ manifesto have an economic growth strategy?" he asked. "You have to decide based on policies." On the other hand, DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama promised to implement the party's manifesto (campaign pledges) in Osaka City and elsewhere and appealed for support to "bring about a change of administration in order to create new politics."

The LDP is fielding 37 candidates on its proportional representation ticket, which is the smallest number ever. It is fighting a "defensive" battle focusing on making sure that candidates who lose in the single-seat constituencies are salvaged through the proportional representation ticket.

In contrast, the DPJ is fielding 59 candidates who are running only on the proportional representation ticket, breaking its record of 20 candidates in 2000. Its total number of candidates, together with candidates running in the single-seat districts, surpasses that of the LDP.

The offensive and defensive postures are also reflected in senior party officials' campaign methods.

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In an unusual phenomenon, LDP faction leaders are now staying close to their own constituencies, while the DPJ's Hatoyama, Secretary General Katsuya Okada, and other executives have been stumping all over the country even before the start of the official campaign period. On August 18, Deputy President Ichiro Ozawa declared in the fifth district of Hokkaido, the constituency of the LDP's former Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura, that "this constituency symbolizes the change of administration."

(5) Part 1 of series "Choice in 2009 Election": Need for a vision for Japan's future

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)
August 19, 2009

Akitoshi Muraoka, political editor

The main issue in the upcoming House of Representatives election, the first in the last four years, is whether the coalition government of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and New Komeito should continue or whether a new administration led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) should be formed.

Yomiuri Shimbun's readers' center has been receiving an unprecedented number of comments on the Lower House election. Nearly

half of them are about the manifestos (campaign pledges).

A man from Tokyo wrote: "There is no indication at all of where they are taking this country." Another man in Fukuoka Prefecture asked: "What is the guarantee that the pledges will be implemented?"

The manifestos are "contracts" with the voters. Policies that will be implemented if the party is voted into power are listed there. This time, all the parties have put a lot of efforts into drawing up the manifestos and the election is regarded as a manifesto-based election. Yet, the voters are still anxious and fretful.

In his speech that kicked off the official campaign on August 18, DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama called for "bringing about new politics not relying on bureaucrats." In order to change the policymaking process from the "bureaucratic cabinet system" to politician-led decision-making, the DPJ proposes in its manifesto to abolish the administrative vice ministers' meeting and create a "national strategy bureau" reporting directly to the prime minister. However, it is unclear what impact this will have on policy and how this will benefit the people's lives.

At the party leaders' debate, Prime Minister Taro Aso said that an increase in the consumption tax rate "will be possible as soon as the economic growth rate reaches 2 percent." However, it is unclear what improvements in pensions, medical and nursing services, and employment will be made using the extra revenue from the consumption tax. The whole picture of social security policy has not been presented.

What will Japan's foreign and security policies be in a turbulent international community and what responsibilities will Japan carry out? The Lower House election is a critical opportunity to put forward the basic national policies to the voters and ask them to choose. However, both the LDP and the DPJ lack an overall political ideology or philosophy transcending the manifesto.

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Without a blueprint for the future of the country and society, a manifesto that contains only a spending list of rosy policies to please the voters and numerical targets and roadmaps for such is not a true manifesto. That is probably why the voters are anxious. If they were presented with a blueprint for Japan's future, they would be able to understand where this country is going and how their lives are going to change.

Only 11 days are left in the campaign period before the election. We would like to see all parties engage in comprehensive and enthusiastic debates on their visions for this country if they take over the reins of government.

(6) 27 former Lower House members retire from political community or decide not to run in Lower House election

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
August 19, 2009

A total of 27 former House of Representatives members, including former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and former Lower House Speaker Yohei Kono, have announced their intentions to retire from the political community or not to run in the Aug. 30 general election. This 27 includes 20 members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the largest number, three independents, two Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) members, and one each from the New Komeito and Japanese Communist Party (JCP).

Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Mayumi Moriyama, an LDP member, was forced to give up running in the Aug. 30 election although she once had been picked as a rival candidate for former Administrative Reform Minister Yoshimi Watanabe, the leader of Your Party.

Taizo Sugimura, one of the so-called Koizumi children who were elected in the 2005 Lower House election, gave up on running in the election because he failed to get LDP endorsement as a candidate for the Hokkaido No. 1 district seat. Kuniko Inoguchi, former state

minister in charge of declining birthrate, who won her Lower House seat in 2005 when she was at the top of the LDP's list for the Tokyo proportional representation portion of the ballot, turned down the LDP's offer because she was listed at a lower rank in the party's list.

Former DPJ Vice President Tetsundo Iwakuni will retire from the political community. Former Finance Minister Hirohisa Fujii, who had once decided not to run in the race, is running as a candidate in the South Kanto proportional representation bloc of the ballot.

(7) Start of official campaign for Lower House election: Urgent need for mid- and long-term strategy for mounting employment, fiscal issues; Relationship with bureaucrats to change

MAINICHI (Page 4) (Full)
August 19, 2009

Osamu Hiraji

In the upcoming House of Representatives election, for which the official campaign started on August 18, the political parties will be put to test on how they will grapple with the mounting economic issues, including their strategies to consolidate the economic

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recovery and put the Japanese economy on track for stable growth. A review of the relationship of politicians with the central government bureaucrats in Kasumigaseki and civil service reform is also an issue in this election. This may become the turning point for a drastic change in the government's policymaking mechanism.

The Japanese economy, which has contracted by over 10 percent since last fall due to the worldwide financial and economic crisis, is finally showing signs of recovery. The real GDP rose at an annualized rate of 3.7 percent in the April-June quarter. However, this was largely a result of the government's fiscal spending. The risks for another downturn due to such factors as instability in the international economy are still considerable. The economy is now at a critical crossroads of whether the recovery will continue. The new administration formed after this election will have to manage economic policies to prevent another round of economic recession.

The employment situation in particular is deteriorating. The unemployment rate was 5.4 percent in June, and the worst rate on record of 5.5 percent is very likely to be surpassed. All parties propose in their manifestoes (campaign pledges) to tighten regulations on temporary workers, but the creation of new jobs will also be an important issue.

Toward this end, a mid- and long-term strategy for the growth of Japan's economy will be necessary. In the wake of the financial crisis, the global economic environment has changed drastically. There is now a strong opinion that "a return to the previous state of all countries relying on excessive consumption in the United States is unlikely." (securities firm analyst). The Japanese economy, which has continued to grow relying on foreign demand, will now need a new growth strategy, such as expansion of domestic demand.

Various parties cite environment, medical and nursing services, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries as the potential growth areas. Bold shifts in existing policies, including agricultural administration reforms, will be necessary to enhance the competitiveness of these industries and make them into an engine for growth.

On the other hand, fiscal health is deteriorating due to the repeated economic pump priming packages and other factors. The combined debts of the national and local governments will reach 800 trillion yen by the end of FY09, which is the worst among the industrialized countries. Passing on the burden to future generations will not only hinder mid- and long-term growth, but poor fiscal health may also cause a tumble in government bond prices and a sharp increase in long-term interest rates, thus applying brakes on the economy.

The new administration will have to steer a delicate course between securing funding for the ever increasing social security expenses and economic stimulation measures and working toward fiscal restructuring. While all parties agree on eliminating wasteful spending in their manifestoes, they are divided on whether to use an increase in the consumption tax as a stable source of revenue. The ruling and opposition parties need to discuss how to deal with the burden on the people across party lines.

Politicians to lead policymaking

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The manifestoes of the political parties all talk about civil service reforms, such as "unified management of senior bureaucrats in the ministries by the cabinet" or "eradication of amakudari (golden parachutes)." All parties agree unanimously on changing from "bureaucrat-led" to "politician-led" policymaking.

Under the LDP administration, the government has needed prior approval from the party's policy divisions or the General Council in the process of policymaking or drafting of laws. The bureaucrats have played a leading role under this "dual structure" consisting of the government and the LDP since they were responsible for coordination with the party on policymaking.

However, the wishes of some zoku giin (Diet members lobbying for special interests) and the concerned ministries and agencies tended to be reflected heavily in policies. This system has been faulted for preventing radical reforms due to old bonds with the zoku giin or sectarian administration, which puts bureaucratic interest before anything else.

The relationship between politicians and bureaucrats may change dramatically after this election. The DPJ pledges to create a "national strategy bureau" reporting directly to the prime minister and implement bold reorganization to break away from bureaucratic control. Even budget formulation, which is fundamental to public administration, will be under political supervision, specifically by the national strategy bureau. Meanwhile, the ruling parties, the LDP and New Komeito, also pledge to "strengthen political leadership."

Furthermore, all major political parties pledge to abolish amakudari. At present, all ministries have a "pyramid structure" and officials are urged to resign ahead of their retirement age. It is likely that the personnel system in central government offices will be changed to enable officials to work until retirement age.

(8) Riding on tailwind, DPJ fields many neophytes, female candidates

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
August 19, 2009

Takuji Nakata

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) fielded 164 neophyte candidates in the forthcoming House of Representatives election, which is about the same number as former Diet members (166). If this party becomes the number one party after the election, it is possible that a phenomenon similar to the "Koizumi children" of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which won a landslide victory in the 2005 election, may occur. We analyzed the characteristics of the DPJ's new candidates in order to project possible changes after the election and found out that they are similar to the Koizumi children.

The average age of the Koizumi children was 44.8 years (at the time of their election), while the average age of the DPJ neophytes is 46 years, a bit older than the Koizumi children. Nineteen percent of the Koizumi children were women, while there are 32 women (20%) among the DPJ's new candidates. At this point, the ratio of women is almost the same as the Koizumi children.

Similar trends can be found in their career backgrounds. According

to Mainichi Shimbun's classification, the Koizumi children consisted of (1) 20 local politicians (24 %); (2) 10 each of bureaucrats and business people (12% each); and (3) 9 secretaries of Diet members (11%). The data for the DPJ neophytes is (1) 39 local politicians (24 %); (2) 16 each of bureaucrats and secretaries of Diet members (10% each); and (3) 13 business people (8%). The two parties seem to be similar also with regard to where they recruit their candidates, despite the slight difference in percentages.

Among the Koizumi children, 36 were elected in the single-seat districts, 33 lost in the single-seat districts but came to win their seats on the proportional representation ticket, while 14 won their seats solely on the proportional representation ticket.

On the other hand, 114 of the DPJ neophytes are running in the single-seat districts, while 50 are running solely on the proportional representation ticket.

Comparing all the LDP and DPJ candidates, the average age for the LDP is 55.5 years, compared to 49.3 years for the DPJ. Fourteen percent of DPJ candidates are women, while the figure is only 8% for the LDP. The DPJ has actively fielded more women.

In terms of former bureaucrats running in the election, the ratio is 17% for the LDP and 12% for the DPJ. Overall, although a growing number of former bureaucrats are becoming DPJ candidates, there are still more bureaucrats-turned-politicians running on the LDP ticket, since the LDP has been in power for many, many years.

(9) LDP, DPJ scurry to prepare candidate lists for proportional representation segment in upcoming Lower House election

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
August 18, 2009

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has no showcase candidates for the upcoming House of Representatives election. However, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is going to field many such candidates. There was a clear difference in the two parties' candidate lists for the proportional representation section of the ballot. The official campaign for the Lower House election will kick off today. The LDP decided not to give special treatment to the so-called Koizumi children, who were elected in the 2005 Lower House election for the first time to the Diet. The DPJ's decision to field many former lawmakers and newcomers as its candidates led to a delay in coordination on its candidate lists.

LDP fails to field showcase candidates

"I can't do that," Health, Labor, and Welfare Minister Yoichi Masuzoe told a senior LDP member who telephoned him on Aug. 16, a day before the LDP revealed its candidate list for the upcoming general election. He was urged to leave his Upper House seat and run in the upcoming Lower House election at the top of the LDP's list for the Tokyo proportional representation portion of the ballot. Many LDP members expected him to run in the election, thinking that in order to prevent their party's clashing defeat there would be no other choice but to field Masuzoe.

There is also a move in the LDP to field Masuzoe as a candidate for the party's presidential race scheduled for September.

However, Masuzoe had not heard a word from the LDP executive until Aug. 16. A cabinet minister deplored: "This shows the lack of the party's governing ability."

Following the failure to field Miyazaki Governor Hideo Higashikokubaru, the LDP was unable to file a showcase candidate in the general election. As a result, no newcomers are filed at the top

of the LDP's list for proportional representation section of the ballot.

Satsuki Katayama and Yukari Sato, who ran in the 2005 election as assassins against candidates opposing postal privatization and who were at the top of the LDP's lists for the proportional representation blocs, were listed at the same ranks as candidates running for both district seats and proportional representation segment. It was difficult to decide on the treatment of Kuniko Inoguchi (Tokyo bloc), Tadayoshi Nagashima (Hokuriku-Shinetsu bloc), and Mitsue Kondo (Kinki bloc) because the then LDP executive had promised to give them special treatment twice.

As a result, Inoguchi decided not to run in the election because she was listed at the 23rd rank at the LDP's list for the Tokyo proportional representation bloc of the ballot. Nagashima and Kondo were at the top of the lists.

DPJ experiences difficulties up to last minute

"We haven't decided yet," said DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama on the afternoon of Aug. 17 as he was leaving party headquarters after a two-hour meeting with Secretary General Katsuya Okada and other party leaders on the party's lists of candidates for the proportional representation segment. Only Deputy President Ichiro Ozawa remained in Tokyo and continued to work on drafting the candidate lists.

The reason for the delay in coordination was the political wind blowing in the DPJ's favor. Another reason is that Ozawa and other DPJ leaders decided immediately before the start of official campaign to substantially increase the number of candidates running only for the proportional representation race.

(10) Security policy debate essential during election campaigning

SANKEI (Page 7) (Abridged)
August 19, 2009

Hisahiko Okazaki, former ambassador to Thailand

Both the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) have unveiled their manifestos (campaign pledges).

In this essay, I will compare some points of the foreign and security policies included in the two parties' manifestos.

Frankly speaking, the DPJ manifesto has no substance. "We will positively undertake Japan's responsibilities," it reads, "while sharing roles with the United States upon the foundation of an independent diplomatic strategy in order to build close and equal relations with the United States as the basis of Japan's foreign policy."

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If "equal" relations means equal defense efforts by the two countries, I can give the manifesto a high assessment as showing a positive stance. But if it embodies the intention to act big in dealing with the United States, that will do more harm than good.

Additionally, it is totally unclear what such words as "close," "independent" and "positive" actually mean.

There is only one point that is concrete: revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). But again, the DPJ manifesto stops short of specifying where and how the pact should be revised. After all, the SOFA with Japan is more favorable to the host nation with regard to criminal court proceedings than are the SOFAs with South Korea and Germany. That is why opposition in Japan has taken the form of a battle against the U.S. bases themselves. But a battle against the U.S. bases is incompatible with the DPJ's vow to build close relations with the United States and to positively undertake Japan's responsibilities.

In contrast, the LDP's manifesto is well-composed.

As a person who has been seeking a solution to the question of the right to collective self-defense, I am particularly impressed by the party's handling of this.

The notion of the right to collective self-defense is hard for the general public to understand. The matter has often resulted in a call for amendments to the Constitution -- an approach unfeasible in the near future -- instead of altering the government's interpretation of the Constitution.

The LDP manifesto is designed to allow Japan to intercept a missile targeting Guam, Hawaii, or the continental United States, adding that it is natural for U.S. and Japanese warships rush to the defense of one another when they come under attack while conducting missile-interception operations. If these two scenarios gain acceptance, the root of the issue will be solved.

The Council on Security and Defense Capabilities recently produced a report whose contents will likely be reflected in the new National Defense Program Guidelines to be formulated this fall. Missile interception, defense of U.S. warships, and a review of the three principles on arms exports are all specified in the report.

If the LDP wins the upcoming election, all these proposals will become an LDP government's policies thanks to the ongoing policy debate. Now that the matter is open for discussion, if the DPJ wins the election, is certain to find it difficult to adhere to its past policy line in the face of criticism from the LDP, which would then be the opposition party.

I hope the ongoing policy debate ignites a supra-partisan effort to fundamentally reexamine security policy. Since the DPJ manifesto vows nothing concrete, there is ample room for the party to take a flexible stance. Further, the party will be relieved of heavy restrictions if it believes the issue of the right to collective self-defense is not a constitutional matter.

(11) What became of the DPJ's philosophy on agricultural administration?

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FORESIGHT (Pages 90-91) (Slightly abridged)
September 2009

Haruhito Ichinokuchi, journalist

Early this spring, the Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (Zenchu), the headquarters of Japan's agricultural cooperatives (JA), "banned a book," telling the cooperatives to "prevent" their members from reading this book "to the extent possible." The book is "Nokyo no Daizai (Serious Crimes of the Agricultural Cooperatives)," which was published in January. It was written by Kazuhito Yamashita, who had just retired from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) in 2008. Since he knows about agricultural administration inside and out, the book contains sharp criticisms of the "triangle of agricultural administration" -- the collusion among MAFF bureaucrats, JA, and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politicians specializing in agricultural issues (norin zoku). The JA is especially taken to task for selling overpriced fertilizers, pesticides, and equipment to farmers and giving top priority to its organizational interests rather than to the cause of strengthening Japan's agriculture.

Zenchu is acting childishly in its attempt to "censor" the book, but the three sides of the triangle equally share the blame. Subsequently, the MAFF was plagued by the scandal over officials doing labor union work during their official working hours, while the LDP norin zoku have become busy campaigning for the general election. The three sides of the triangle are desperately trying to protect their own organizations and have forgotten all about policies.

Crisis to surface right after new administration is inaugurated?

A crisis is looming for Japan's agriculture. It will be triggered by the outcome of the new round of multilateral trade talks (Doha Round) at the World Trade Organization (WTO). Since the financial crisis last fall, many countries have begun to take protectionist measures. The United States, for example, put forward economic stimulation measures containing "buy America" clauses. In addition, the Obama administration was elected under a pledge to review the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It is widely believed that now is not the time for further trade liberalization, and it will be difficult to reach an agreement in the Doha Round at an early date.

However, the first G-8 joint communiqué issued with China, India and other newly emerging economies at the summit in Italy from July 8 declared that a ministerial conference for the new round will be held in September, aiming at reaching an agreement in 2010. Therefore, there might be significant moves in the new round at a time when Japan is still fragile following the inauguration of a new administration.

"The talks almost reached an agreement in July 2008," reveals a source knowledgeable about the negotiations. "The sticking point was non-agricultural products. The rest was up to the U.S." Shinji Hattori, former dean of Toyo University's Faculty of Economics who is familiar with the WTO negotiations, has published a study attesting to this.

According to the book "Steep Price Increase: The WTO and the 2008 U.S. Farm Bill (Kakaku Koto WTO to Amerika 2008 nen Nogyo)" (Norin

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Tokei Shuppan), the United States' main interest is no longer the agricultural sector. The key issues have shifted to reduction of tariffs on mining and industrial products in developing countries, particularly the liberalization of the market for industrial machinery and electronic products. While China, India, Brazil, and other emerging economies are "not obliged" to participate in the negotiations, the U.S. is strongly demanding their participation, thus coming into conflict with them.

However, China and the emerging economies have come to have a stronger voice after the financial crisis. The U.S. may be at a disadvantage if the negotiations drag on much longer. It is fully possible that the Obama administration, which has so far given priority to massive fiscal spending and monetary easing to deal with the economic crisis, may aim for a quick conclusion to the Doha Round in order to expand world trade as the second phase of its economic stimulation policies.

The most important thing is that an agreement has virtually been reached in agriculture. The Falconer Draft Text presented by the chair of the WTO negotiating group on agriculture last year was very tough on Japan's agriculture. With regard to rice, Japan will have to accept either a major cut in tariff or a substantial expansion of minimum access. If this is incorporated into the final new round agreement without modification, Japan will face an excess supply of rice and, therefore, a sharp decline in prices.

For sure, the Japanese government is not just sitting idly. In anticipation of this situation, the MAFF under the Koizumi administration engaged in repeated discussions and came up with the "outline of rice policy reform" in December 2002 and the "basic program for food, agriculture, and rural villages" of March 2005. These were followed by such concrete legislative actions as the amendment of the Staple Food Law of July 2003 and the introduction of the "Sector-wide Farm Income Stabilization Program" in April 2007.

The essence of Koizumi's reform of agricultural administration was the "privatization" of the virtually "nationalized" rice production by the national government, the JA, and the farmers. The idea was for the government to provide support only to "motivated and capable farmers" while gradually reducing its involvement in production adjustment, in order to cultivate farmers capable of surviving international competition. A transition to autonomous production

adjustment by the producers, i.e. the JA, was supposed to take place. However, with the ruling parties' crushing defeat in the July 2007 House of Councillors election, the policy of strengthening government involvement has been "restored," as this magazine has pointed out repeatedly.

While the politicians all talk about giving importance to agriculture, they only think of their own election. The bureaucrats could not care less whether policies make sense; they only care about protecting their own organizations. Professor Emeritus Naomi Saeki of Tokyo University, an authority on agronomics who has been deeply involved with agricultural administration from the standpoint of a scholar, expresses his indignation in his book "Kome Seisaku no Shuen (The Demise of Rice Policy)" (Norin Tokei Shuppan), published last April. He laments that rice has been transformed from a politicized crop in the struggle over rice prices to a crop used for political maneuvering. He points out that voluntary production adjustment under the rice acreage reduction (gentan) program is

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actually the first step toward the abolition of production adjustment. He fiercely opposes optional gentan as backsliding.

Such disappointment is common among scholars who have been watching agricultural administration for many years. In his book "Nihon no Nogyo wa Seicho Sangyo ni Kaerareru (Japan's Agriculture Can be Changed Into a Growth Industry)" (Yosensha) published in June, Ikkan Oizumi, vice president of Miyagi University, also laments the straying of agricultural administration, blaming this on "the barter of votes and rice" under a cabinet system consisting of zoku giin (Diet members lobbying for special interests)

LDP "reversion"

In order not to repeat the above mistakes, researchers all point to the need to dismantle the "triangle of agricultural administration" and engage in a thoroughgoing policy debate on the ideology and future of agricultural administration in the forthcoming general election.

However, the LDP's manifesto (campaign pledges) shows no signs of such an ideology. It is so sweeping that one can only conclude the party is desperate. If one searches for policy direction in the pledges, the distinguishing feature is a degree of "reversion" to old policies worse than what Saeki fears. For example, the LDP is "removing acreage and age requirements and offering aid to all motivated farmers," putting an end to Koizumi's agricultural administration reforms. The LDP also proposes to "enhance measures" for rice production adjustment, moving in the direction of boosting gentan.

In comparison, the Democratic Party of Japan's policy was once underpinned by a philosophy. I say "once" because its manifesto represents an obvious regression from its "Policy Index 2009, the basis of the manifesto.

For example, the Index's proposal for "creating the conditions for active formation of agricultural cooperative organizations" is absent from the manifesto. This is supposed to be a policy allowing the formation of specialized agricultural cooperatives of large-scale farmers to compete with the monopolistic regional JAs, in order to dismantle the "triangle" and let the JAs once again dedicate themselves to their original objective of agricultural development. Such is also Yamashita's longstanding recommendation, but this has probably been removed from the manifesto because of the anticipated opposition of JA.

Furthermore, the original manifesto entry on "concluding a free trade agreement (FTA) with the U.S. and promoting the liberalization of trade and investment" was changed to "promoting" (negotiations for) an FTA owing to strong opposition from the rural constituencies. While Tatsuo Hirano, deputy secretary general of the DPJ's headquarters for the revival of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, explains that "rice, livestock and dairy products, and other key products will be treated as exceptions in the negotiations with the U.S.," it is unlikely that the U.S. will agree to FTA

negotiations with so many exceptions.

Even if the U.S. accepts rice and other products as "exceptions," FTAs normally allow "exceptions" only up to 10 percent of trade items, which means exceptions will be limited by both trade volume and tariff line calculations. Too many exceptions will constitute a

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violation of WTO rules, so negotiations are going to be really tough. As it is about to capture political power, the DPJ's manifesto is beginning to lose its philosophical base.

On the other hand, the DPJ's manifesto also calls for "raising the food self-sufficiency ratio." Is this compatible with a Japan-U.S. FTA? Does this not mean giving up on the viability of Japanese agriculture as an "industry"? If a sharp decline in the prices of agricultural products is allowed while paying income subsidies to farmers in the red, consumers will indeed enjoy cheaper food prices in the short term. However, the fiscal burden will be in the vicinity of 3 trillion yen, which is equivalent to the current value of the total domestic production of all major crops. This will not be acceptable to the taxpayers unless Japan follows the Swiss example, separating agriculture from ordinary industries and redefining it as "regional development."

Agricultural administration is in a state of extreme confusion, and Japan is directly facing external pressure for trade liberalization. As the media outlets occupy themselves with reporting scandals and the election, books by researchers expressing a strong sense of crisis are pointing the right direction for agricultural administration. The question is whether the political authorities will be able to implement the proposals.

(12) April-June real GDP grows 3.7% on rise in exports to Asia

NIKKEI (Top Play) (Excerpts)
August 17, 2009

The nation's gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by a price-adjusted 0.9% and an annualized 3.7% in the April-June quarter in real terms from the previous quarter, marking the first growth in five quarters, according to preliminary data released by the Cabinet Office today. The positive growth is attributed to a pickup in exports and public investment in addition to the government's additional economic stimulus measures. Consumer spending also grew for the first time in three quarters thanks to tax breaks for eco-friendly car owners and other measures. This figure, however, is 7.5% less than the highest ever growth rate recorded in the January-March period of last year. Given this, it will take more time until the economy emerges from its worst period in the postwar period.

Economic measures contribute to boosting public investment, consumer spending

The growth rate in the April-June period was far larger than the nation's potential growth rate of about 1%. According to the average estimate of private-sector research institutions surveyed by QUICK Corp, the economy likely expanded at an annualized rate of 3.4%. The real growth rate was 0.3 points more than this estimate. But the nominal growth figure shrank 0.2% (an annualized negative 0.7% growth rate), marking the fifth consecutive quarterly drop.

The Cabinet Office also revised upward the growth rate for last year. As a result, the post-war worst record of GDP growth is a minus 3.5% growth, a record slump of 13.5 percentage points, in the October-December period in 2008, followed by a 13.1% contraction in the January-March period in 1974 and an 11.7% drop in the January-March period in 2009.

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The GDP rise in the April-June period was largely due to an upturn in overseas demand. Exports of electronic parts and other products

to China climbed by 6.3% from the same period a year ago although in the January-March quarter, such shipments posted a 22.5% yearly drop. Foreign demand pushed up overall growth 1.6 percentage points.

Expanded investment by the central and local governments also served to buoy quarter-to-quarter growth. Public investment was up 8.1%, marking the highest record after a rise of 10.3% was recorded in the October-December period in 1998. Government spending was down just 0.3% as the number of civil servants was reduced, but an increase in spending by all government agencies pushed up the growth figure 0.3 percentage points.

Consumer spending, which accounts for less than 60% of the nation's GDP, increased 0.8%, marking the first positive growth since the July-September quarter in 2008. Consumption of durable goods such as automobiles and televisions grew 6.6%, pushing up the growth rate by 0.3 percentage points. But it is certainly true that drops in commodity prices boosted GDP growth, and so the nominal growth of consumption stayed at only 0.3%.

Meanwhile, capital investment declined 4.3% from the same period a year ago, marking the fifth consecutive quarterly drop. Housing investment deteriorated 9.5% as housing starts for condominiums fell sharply, the second consecutive quarter of decline. The drops in these sectors had a downward impact of 1.0 percentage points.

The GDP deflator increased for the third consecutive quarter, posting a 0.5% growth. But the domestic demand deflator showed a 1.7% decline, a further drop from the previous quarter.

(13) Futenma relocation: 344 people file case against Japanese Government today requesting another environmental assessment

Okinawa Times (Page 29) (Full)
August 19, 2009

Regarding the environmental assessment associated with the construction of a replacement facility for the U.S. military's Futenma Air Station, 344 plaintiffs from inside and outside Okinawa Prefecture will file a case against the Japanese Government on August 19 claiming that the Okinawa Defense Bureau, which was the implementing organization (of the assessment) did not follow the legal process in preparing documents describing methods and preparation. The plaintiffs will demand a confirmation of the Japanese Government's obligation to do another assessment procedure and compensation for damage.

The current assessment law does not include provisions on the legal process for making complaints on flaws in the procedure. The plaintiffs, therefore, based their appeal on the "action on confirmation" stipulated in the Administrative Case Litigation Act. According to the defense group, it is the first appeal in Japan to condemn a flaw in the procedure while an assessment is still in progress.

(14) Okinawa Municipal Council for Military Land Conversion and Base Problems to request cancellation of live-fire drills - Okinawa Governor joins the council for first time to reveal stray bullet incident

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Okinawa Times (Page 2) (Full)
August 19, 2009

Okinawa Municipal Council for Military Land Conversion and Base Problems (chaired by Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima), which is comprised of leaders of municipalities hosting U.S. military bases in Okinawa Prefecture, held an ordinary general meeting for 2009 in Naha City on August 18. In response to a request from Kin Town and Uruma Town, the council decided to request the Governments of Japan and the United States to provide full disclosure of the stray bullet incident that took place in Igei district, Kin Town, and the suspension of live-fire training at Camp Hansen until the incident is fully disclosed and investigated. The council will also request

the cancellation of parachute drop training at Tsuken Jima Training Area (Uruma City).

Moreover, Okinawa City and Naha City requested management of dogs owned by U.S. military-related personnel and putting flight restrictions on U.S. military aircraft over crowded residential areas. The council decided to coordinate its efforts before making requests.

Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima participated in the general meeting for the first time at the request of municipal leaders. It was decided that the governor will accompany the council when it makes petitions to the Government of Japan and the United States. Governor Nakaima commented on making requests to the government, saying, "It (requests) goes in (government's) ear and out the other. Can't we influence the government in a way that the government will have no choice but respond? We should better set up a strategy committee. It is okay to open a Pandora's Box."

The council confirmed that it will make an eight-point request including the return of firing ranges in Tori Shima and Kume Jima (in Kume Jima Town). "A request to promote the settlement of various issues stemming from (U.S.) military bases," which the council delivers to the Government of Japan and the United States annually, will be included in the request.

The council usually makes petition visits to offices and organizations related to the governments of Japan and the United States within and outside Okinawa Prefecture in around August to September. This year the council plans to make petition visits after mid-October, taking the general election and local assembly schedules into consideration. The council is also considering visiting U.S. Military's Futenma Air Station and Iwakuni Air Station after November.

The board of trustees comprised of some council members has been abolished. Naha Mayor Takeshi Onaga was elected as the vice chairman (of the council) to replace former Uruma City Mayor Tsuneo Chinen, who retired voluntarily.

ZUMWALT